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SUBJECT: SADC MISSION DECLARES SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTION FREE
AND FAIR

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Summary

¶1. (U) The Southern African Development Community (SADC) concluded that South Africa's national and provincial election on April 22 was "peaceful, free, fair, and transparent." SADC's delegation, which comprised 108 observers from the region, was led by Swaziland's Minister of Agriculture Clement Dlamini. Despite the mission's statements that the election results reflect the will of the people, the SADC delegation did investigate some concerns from stakeholders about the pre-election environment and offered some suggestions and recommendations for future elections. End Summary.

"Free and Fair" . . .

¶2. (U) A SADC delegation of 108 observers from the region held a press conference on April 25 and described the national and provincial election on April 22 as "peaceful, free, fair, and transparent." Swaziland's Minister of Agriculture Clement Dlamini told a crowd in Pretoria that "political parties followed relevant legislation to address election-related issues affecting them with the electoral commission."

. . . With Some Concerns

¶3. (U) SADC also noted some areas of concern regarding the election. Observers pointed out that voting by South Africans living overseas proved to be one of the areas of most concern for the election's credibility. The delegation noted that there was a lack of a clear legal framework to regulate voter registration overseas. The SADC mission also said the involvement of the Department of Foreign Affairs at voting stations overseas was an issue because diplomats often are seen as political agents of the ruling party. A second area of concern focused on logistical issues. The mission said that in some areas voting stations ran out of ballots and ballot boxes. (Note: The U. S. Mission's own observer teams also noticed that some voting stations were running short of ballots and ballot boxes. End Note.) The third area of concern focused on issues of political freedom, noting that in some areas political parties set up stands

inside the perimeter of voting stations -- e.g., too close to Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) polling stations. They also said there was singing, dancing, and shouting of political slogans outside stations as well as party agents wearing party colors. (Note: Some of the U. S. Mission's observing teams saw parties outside of voting stations with music blaring out of expensive cars near party supporters waving huge party flags. End Note.)

SADC Offers Few Recommendations

¶4. (U) The SADC observer mission suggested the IEC should enhance its logistical support in the provision, development, printing, transportation, storage, and management of voting materials. The delegation also noted that improved supplying of transparent ballot boxes at all voting stations was needed in the future -- especially ballot papers. Moreover, SADC's officers said that the amendment of electoral laws was necessary to prohibit political activities within the vicinity of voting stations.

Comment

¶5. (U) SADC's observer mission seemed largely satisfied that the April 22 election in South Africa reflected the will of the people. Although generally positive, the regional observers pointed out some isolated areas where the IEC may have fallen short and some areas that the SAG could improve. The question will be how many of the recommendations the IEC takes onboard and how South Africa's electoral commission

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evolves ahead of the 2011 local election.
LA LIME